

**My visit to Mount Sinai hospital
Otolaryngology department
Toronto, summer 2006**

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Toronto is the largest city in Canada and the provincial capital of Ontario, located in the northwest shore of Lake Ontario. The city has a population of 2.48 million and its metro region. Toronto is considered as Canada's biggest economic hub which makes it a major destination for immigrants to Canada. This is certainly reflected in the cosmopolitan population, and the diverse spectrum of east meet west culture.

Mount Sinai Hospital is part of the "university health network" of the University of Toronto. The other centres include Toronto General Hospital, Princess Margaret Hospital and Toronto Western Hospital. These units serve as the tertiary referral centres for otolaryngology in the city of Toronto covering a population of more than 2.5 millions offering world class services in head and neck surgical oncology, skull base surgery, and advanced facial plastic reconstruction surgery. These hospitals were mostly housed in big single street of University Avenue, together with the world renowned Hospital of Sick Children in Toronto.

My visit had a bumpy start, with my airline losing my baggage for more than 5 days, though that gave me a good excuse to catch the last of the summer sale. I had the pleasure of visiting the Department of Otolaryngology in Mount Sinai Hospital during the month of September 2006, under the care of Professor Jeremy Freeman. The department houses another 4 staff surgeons and see few thousands new patients every year. The unit offers all the general otolaryngology disciplines with also being a national centre for thyroid surgery. Dr Freeman's endocrine centre perform more than 300 thyroid and

parathyroid procedures every year, with full time two academic endocrinologists and scientists producing international renowned research in thyroid diseases.

I also was fortunate to visit the Otolaryngology Departments in Toronto General Hospital under the care of Professor Patrick Gullane, who is the Otolaryngologist in Chief for the whole “University Health Network”. I attended the ward rounds which started every day at about 6.30 am, following this I observed both Dr Freeman and Gullane performing a whole range of thyroid surgery, and different complex head and neck cancer procedures with state of the art reconstruction through multidisciplinary surgical teams.

I also attended the weekly board meeting in the Princess Margaret Hospital to discuss the new head and neck cancer patients and their planned management. The combined head and neck clinics were in this hospital, and the last year this clinic has seen 1500 new head and neck cancer patient, as a national tertiary referral centre.

The postgraduate teaching involved 3 days in the middle of the week (i.e. starting at the end of the working day at 7 pm) with different presentation from the residents or the attached medical students. I enjoyed the grand rounds every Friday morning in their postgraduate centre, and I was really impressed by the level of the attendance from the most junior trainee to the Prof Gullane as Otolaryngologist in Chief, with usual numbers exceeding 30-40 attendee. Meanwhile, I had the opportunity to attend the annual meeting of the American Academy of Otolaryngology, which was held in Toronto as the first time ever to be held outside the USA. This was partly as a recognition of Prof Gullane’s life long work. He was given the honour of presenting the keynote lecture of “Eugene Myers” about his life experience in reconstructive head and neck surgery.

My visit to Toronto was a life time experience to me, and certainly introduced me to the robust North American health care system, which in Canada still enjoyed as well the benefits of our National Health Service being a free service to all the tax payers though certainly the efficiency of the system exceeded my expectations.

